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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MR](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: SENEGAL: DEMARCHE REGARDING WADE'S COMMENTS ON
MAURITANIAN COUP

REF: 09/11/08 ARENDT/BERNICAT DEMARCHE EMAIL

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR MARCIA BERNICAT FOR REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Under instruction from Senegal's President Wade and in the presence of his Mauritanian counterpart, Foreign Minister Gadio publicly reiterated on September 17 Senegal's support of the AU position condemning the use of coup d'etat. The Foreign Minister had briefed Wade on the ref demarche expressing USG disappointment with Wade's comments on the recent coup in Mauritania, which Ambassador delivered to Foreign Minister Gadio on September 16. During the meeting Gadio had also echoed Senegal's President saying that Senegal must tread carefully when dealing with its immediate neighbors, given that Senegalese citizens resident in Mauritania have been subject to violent reprisals in the past when Senegal was too vocal in its criticism of events in Mauritania. The Foreign Minister underscored his government's desire to see democracy restored in Mauritania. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On September 16, Ambassador Bernicat, accompanied by Political Counselor Mosby, met with and delivered ref demarche to Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio expressing the USG's disappointment regarding President Abdoulaye Wade's September 10 comments calling for a moderate reaction to the recent coup d'etat in Mauritania. The Ambassador emphasized that the coup is a significant setback for Mauritania and noted that the African Union (AU), Nigeria, and South Africa had condemned the coup, as had the Secretary of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The Ambassador stressed that so-called political errors by ousted President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi could not be used to justify a military takeover and the contravention of the constitution. She also explained that sanctions under consideration by the United States would target coup leaders, cabinet members, and civilians assisting the illegal junta.

¶3. (C) Foreign Minister Gadio responded, in spite of President Wade's comments, that Senegal's "real" position on the matter has not changed: Senegal supports the position of the AU and condemns all coups. Gadio described President Wade's comments as the result of discussing with the press hypothetical scenarios for the return of President Abdallahi to power, suggesting that Wade was merely a victim of giving a too frank analysis of the situation to the media.

Senegal Supports AU Position, But Must Be Careful

¶4. (C) Gadio emphasized that Senegal supports democracy and believes there is no "good" coup d'etat. However, the Foreign Minister was at pains to explain that, while Senegal could be tough in the case of Zimbabwe, for example, the government must proceed with caution when responding to events in Mauritania (as it must with its other neighbors the

Gambia, Mali, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau) because of the potential consequences, especially for Senegalese immigrants residing in Mauritania. He pointed out that Senegal is "surrounded by generals," (whether elected or not) and therefore had to be careful. According to Gadio, former Mauritanian President Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya expelled and massacred black Mauriticians and Senegalese immigrants in part because it was reported in the press that President Wade had taken a hard line with Taya in a phone conversation.

President Abdallahi Was Elected, But He's No Saint

15. (C) Gadio also commented that while President Abdallahi was democratically elected, he was not "pure" and had become president "by accident." The Foreign Minister described Abdallahi's candidacy as the creation of the military. When asked by the Ambassador if he thought the 2007 election had been free and fair, Gadio responded that the election itself had been free and fair, but that the candidates and events had been manipulated and orchestrated beforehand. Moreover, he reported that a source close to the ousted president claims that President Abdallahi chose to fire all of the military chiefs to prevent a "constitutional coup." Ostensibly, the coup leaders were working with members of parliament to engineer the legal removal of the president. Gadio suggested that by firing the military chiefs before they could get such a measure passed, President Abdallahi forced the coup leaders, hand.

Coup Leader Aziz Isn't All Bad

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16. (C) With regard to coup leader Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, Gadio noted with approval that Aziz has been using the title of "President of the High Council of State" rather than "President of the Republic." Therefore, the Foreign Minister suggested, these events could conceivably and technically be viewed as a "crisis" rather than a coup and that a "path out of the crisis" might be possible. Some European countries, he added, were exploring whether President Abdallahi could be returned to power only to resign and allow for new elections to maintain democratic form. Moreover, Gadio was pleased that Aziz has informed Senegal that he will honor the previous government's agreement regarding the repatriation of black Mauritanian refugees and insists that he wants a "non-racial" Mauritania.

I Will Reiterate Our Support of the AU Position

17. (C) The Foreign Minister, as promised, subsequently informed President Wade of the USG's disappointment and concerns. Wade in turn reportedly informed Mauritanian Foreign Minister Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou during a September 17 meeting in Dakar that the Americans had requested a strong statement from Senegal condemning the coup, given that Senegal is a democracy, and instructed Gadio to make such a statement in Mohamedou's presence.

18. (U) Gadio made the statement to local media upon leaving the presidency with the Mauritanian Foreign Minister by his side. Gadio said that Senegal "has no other option but to align itself with the AU position on military coups." President Wade consults regularly with Jean Ping, head of the AU Commission, regarding the coup. Gadio reiterated that the AU condemns coups and has called for the restoration of democratic order and constitutional rule. Gadio went on to note that in President Wade's own words the Senegalese and Mauritians are "one people in two states" and therefore what happens in Mauritania is of concern to Senegal. Gadio emphasized that Senegal is sensitive to these special links and that Presidents Wade and Aziz communicate regularly. Moreover, he said, the meeting with Foreign Minister

Mohamedou went well. Finally, he noted that Senegal acknowledges the reality of the coup in Mauritania but encourages the country to return to democratically elected government. His comments were later broadcast on local television at 8:00 pm.

Comment

19. (C) Post was pleased to see such a quick and clear response to the ref demarche. Even though it was Gadio who delivered the condemnation, doing so in the presence of Mauritania's Foreign Minister sends a stronger message than we would have anticipated. It is, however, worthy of note that Gadio called for the return of democratically elected government, but not necessarily the return of Abdallahi to power.

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